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## Reporting child abuse

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### Australian Capital Territory

#### Legislation

##### Who is legislatively required to implement child-safe environments?

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, contact the Police immediately by dialling 000.

There are a number of professions who are mandated to report suspicions of child abuse (e.g. teachers, doctors, nurses, child care centre staff). These individuals are known as mandatory reporters.

Although people working in sporting or recreation organisations are not mandatory reporters, there may be some individuals who do have this responsibility as a result of their employment with other organisations (e.g. teachers who coach the local team).

For more information go to [Care and Protection Services](#). ACT Government, Community Services Directorate.

##### Are there penalties involved for failing to report?

Yes. People who fail to meet their mandated notifier obligations can be fined or sent to gaol.

It is good practice to report any concerns relating to the safety of children, and consistent with an organisation's moral and legal responsibility to ensure that children in their care are safe.

#### Action

##### What gets reported?

Any reasonable suspicion of neglect or abuse. You don't have to have proof. If you suspect that a child is in need of protection then you should make a report.

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## Where to make a report?

Contact [Care and Protection Services](#) within the Community Services Directorate on one of the following numbers:

- Mandated Reporters: 1300 556 728  
Fax: 6205 0641 or email Child Protection Reports to [childprotection@act.gov.au](mailto:childprotection@act.gov.au)
- General Public Contact Number: 1300 556 729
- After Hours Crisis Services: 1300 556 729

## Useful information

### Child-safe environments

Introducing child-safe measures will help your organisation manage risks and keep children safe. They are put in place to prevent and minimise opportunities for child abuse within your organisation, and include measures to prevent offenders from gaining access to your organisation.

Child-safe measures include ensuring your staff and volunteers understand their child protection obligations and that staff and volunteers know who to go to should they have suspicions a child may be at risk of harm.

Organisations working to create child-safe environments and strengthen their environment are committed to and understand the importance of children's safety, and that the care and protection of children is everybody's responsibility.

### What does establishing a child-safe environment involve?

Basically it requires putting strategies in place to prevent offenders from gaining access to your organisation and reducing opportunities for abuse.

These strategies include:

- **Understanding** the different types of child abuse.
- **Identifying** potential risks and dangers to children (e.g. going away on camps) and managing those risks.
- **Developing** guidelines and processes that clearly outline how to respond to child protection issues.
- **Choosing** your staff with care.
- **Ensuring** that your Codes of Conduct for employees and volunteers are adequate.
- **Outlining** standards of care for ensuring the safety of children, including having standards to address any bullying or other concerns of children involved with your organisation.
- **Seeking feedback** from children who are involved in your organisation, and use this feedback in reviewing how your service operates.
- State your commitment to a child safe environment when advertising vacant positions.
- Seek criminal history checks for employees/volunteers working with children.

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- Conduct referee checks (particularly with previous child-related employers, if possible).

**Nominating** a child protection officer and/or Member Protection Information Officer who people can trust and go to with their concerns.

**Ensuring** that all staff (paid and volunteers) understand their mandatory/ethical reporting obligations for suspected child abuse.

**Ensuring** staff have a clear understanding of acceptable/ unacceptable behaviour and know who to contact to about concerns they may have.

**Talking** openly about the importance of ensuring the safety of children within your organisation.

## Resources

- [Keeping Children and Young People Safe: A Shared Community Responsibility](#) (March 2011), Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services
- [ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services](#)
- [Child Wise – “Choose With Care: 12 Steps to a Child Safe Organisation”](#)

